

A State Trailways Planning Partnership

# Connecting MICHIGAN



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*Michigan Trails & Greenways Alliance is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.*

**In early 2006, Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance in conjunction with the National Park Service Rivers and Trails Program and the Michigan Recreation and Park Association launched Connecting Michigan: A State Trailways Planning Partnership, with 200 people energized and intent on making a positive difference in the future of Michigan's trailway system. Included in the partnership were national, state, regional, and local partners who together formed 10 task forces to address the following critical issues to overcome for achieving a statewide connected system of trailways:**

- Funding for Trail Acquisition, Construction, and Maintenance
- Statewide Trailway Database and Website: GIS-Mapped State Trails
- Property Issues: Working with Easements and Titles
- Trailways Usage: Programming & Promotions
- On-Road Connections: Linking the Trailways
- Building Trailways Support: Education & Advocacy
- Overcoming Boundaries: Gaining Cooperation
- Coordinating Resources: Technical Assistance for Funding, Planning, & Design
- Multi-Use Trails and Design: Resource Guidelines & Information Clearinghouse
- Statewide Trailways Network: Identifying Opportunities & Setting Priorities

Over the course of this year-long project, the task forces each tackled their issue by better understanding and defining the problems, learning from experts about the topic, and formulating goals and action steps for resolution.

The research on each of the issues and the resulting goals and action steps were compiled into a 40-page color report, *"Connecting Michigan: A State Trailways Vision and Action Plan"* which lays the groundwork for bringing a coordinated statewide trailways vision to life through sustainable change.

Four comprehensive goals emerged from the task forces' action plans. Together they comprise the ingredients for the success of an interconnected state trailways system. They are:

- Ensure that Michigan's trailway stakeholders will have ready access to technical resources, and best practices from Michigan and beyond, and across all of the many facets of trailways planning, acquisition, development, maintenance, operations, and advocacy.
- Improve Michigan's financial, maintenance, and marketing resources necessary for developing, promoting, enhancing, and sustaining a statewide, interconnected trailway system.
- Improve coordinating and communication, encourage cooperation, foster new partnerships to support trailway planning, development, management, and programming that enhance the trailway experience.
- Provide Michigan's trailway stakeholders with a compelling statewide trailway vision and a tactical plan to achieve and market the vision.

The *Connecting Michigan State Trailways Vision and Action Plan*, released in May, 2007 has since been distributed all over the state through the partnerships with agencies and organizations and through the news media, targeted meetings and educational presentations. Over one hundred agencies and individuals from national, state, and local governmental jurisdictions, professionals from transportation, parks and recreation, engineering, landscape architecture, health, environment, tourism, and economic development arenas, and trail advocacy groups from across Michigan have voiced their resounding support for the vision and action plan, while pledging to work with MTGA and our partners on implementing its action steps.

## Implementation

The implementation phase of this project, *"Connecting Michigan in Action"* is now underway. MTGA will convene work groups and assemble funding proposals for both large and small objectives to provide a variety of ways for foundations, corporations, and individuals to assist financially in getting the work done.

All who have participated to this point in the project and new partners will be invited to take part in the action. The future of Michigan's trailways depends on a powerful collaboration that supports grassroots and governmental efforts, inspires creative solutions and a common vision, and improves and enhances communication between all the partners.

***Trails are a "Natural Centerpiece" for Quality of Life in cities, towns, and villages across Michigan! The health, recreation, economic development, and transportation benefits associated with trails are many!***

## **Health**

People who reported using trails at least once a week were twice as likely to meet physical activity recommendations than people who reported rarely or never using trails, according to a study published by the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* (Librett et al. 2006). According to the Surgeon General's "call to action" less than one-third of Americans meet the CDC's recommendation for physical activity, and 40 percent of adults engage in no leisure-time physical activity at all (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1996).

A study, conducted by Dr. David Chenoweth in 2003 for the Michigan Fitness Foundation, found that physical activity among Michigan's 7.6 million adults cost nearly \$8.9 billion in avoidable health care costs in 2002.

Richard Jackson, MD, Director of the Center for Disease Control, National Center for Environmental Health, stated in the 2001 report, *"Creating a Healthy Environment; The Impact of the Built Environment on Public Health,"* "It is dishonest to tell our citizens to walk, jog or bicycle when there is no safe or welcoming place to pursue these life-saving activities."

## **Recreation**

Public opinion has pushed trails to the top of most parks and recreation master plans across the state. How do you measure the strengthening of ties across friends and family that come from positive experiences on the trail? Pictures help tell the story:

## **Economic Development**

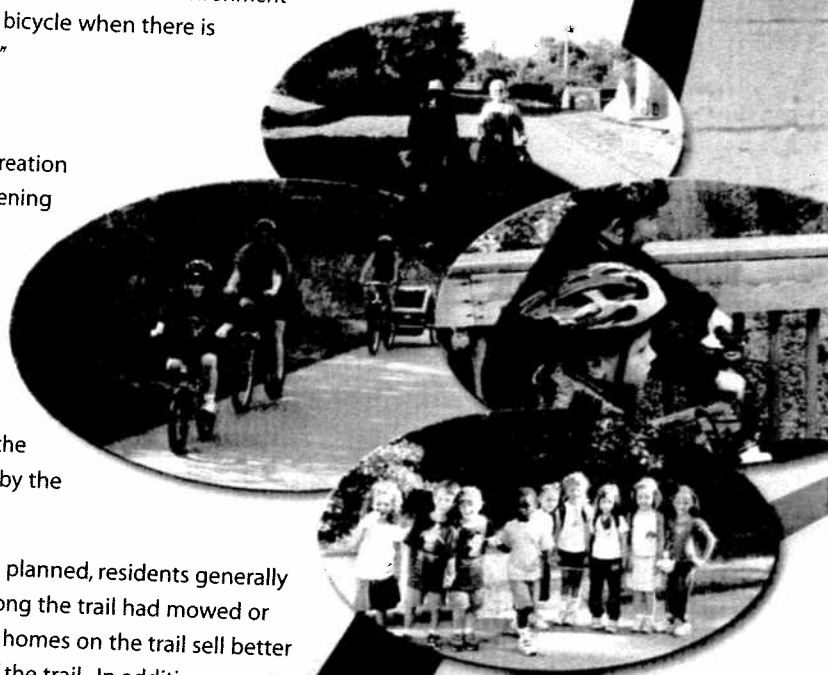
Trails are the No. 1 amenity potential homeowners cite when asked what they would like to see in a new community, according to the National Association of Home Builders. Trails were cited as the top amenity by 57 percent of prospective buyers in a 2004 survey by the association (New York Times, Bradley Melekian, 2006).

When the Paint Creek Trail (Lake Orion to Rochester, Michigan) was planned, residents generally opposed it. Within two years of completion, almost every home along the trail had mowed or built their own access to the trail. Realtors in the area indicate that homes on the trail sell better and bring as much as 10 percent more than comparable homes off the trail. In addition, two restaurants in Rochester, both located trailside, are often filled with riders, rollerbladers, walkers, and joggers in mid-afternoon – traditionally a "dead time" for the restaurant business. This scenario is repeated over and over again on trails across Michigan.

## **Transportation**

According to the 2001 National Household Travel Survey, nearly half of all travel trips taken in the United States are 3 miles or less in length and 28 percent are less than 1 mile. Minneapolis-St. Paul's connected non-motorized network of trails and on-road connections has precipitated a nearly 30 percent share of area transportation as non-motorized trips. That equals 4% of all trip miles.

The TART Trail Study by MSU in 2004 found that transportation uses of the TART Trail in the City of Traverse City accounted for 17% of its use. The TART Trail is well-connected to businesses, shops, parks, and neighborhoods.



**Connecting  
MICHIGAN**

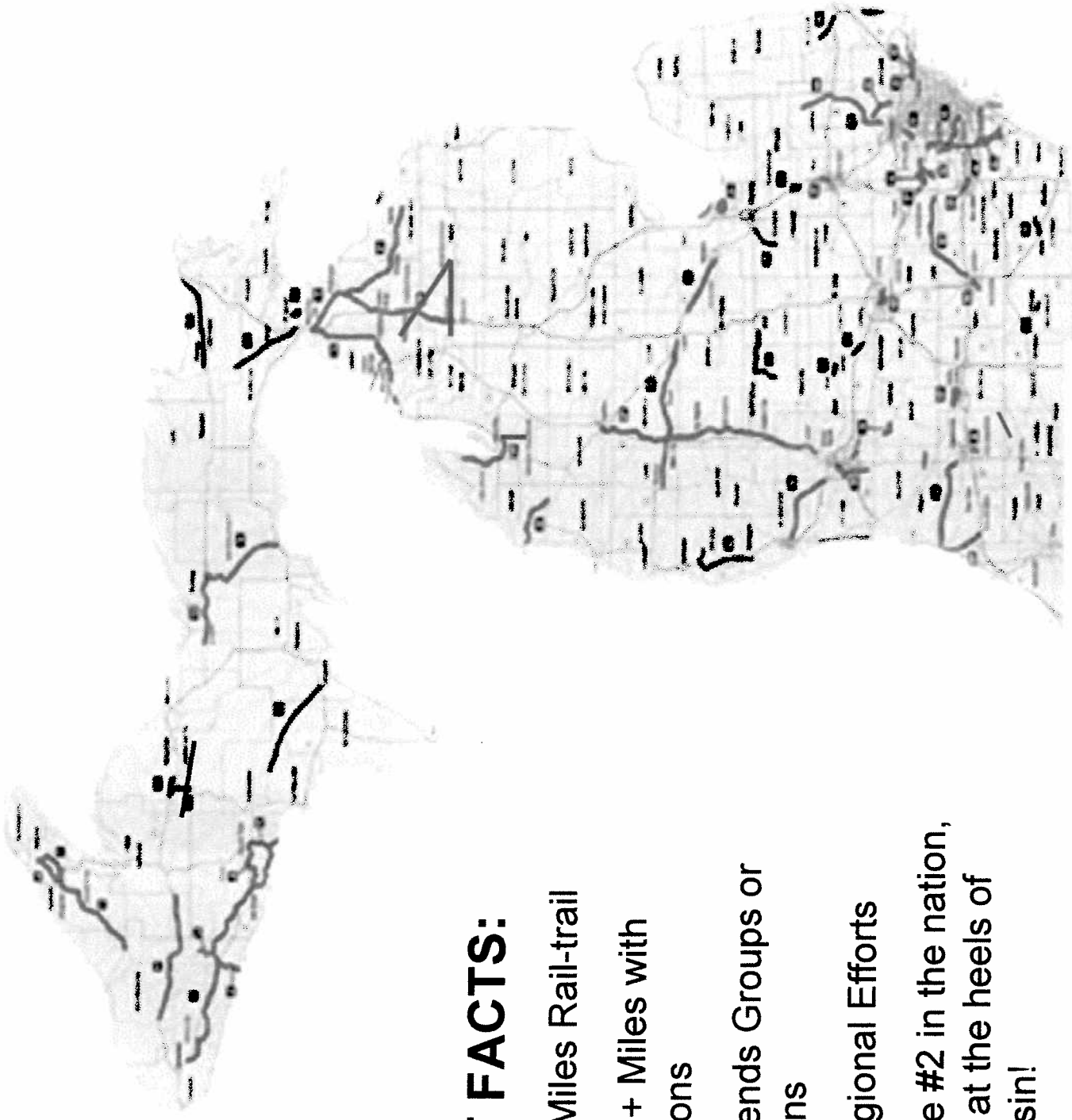
A statewide trailways vision and action plan

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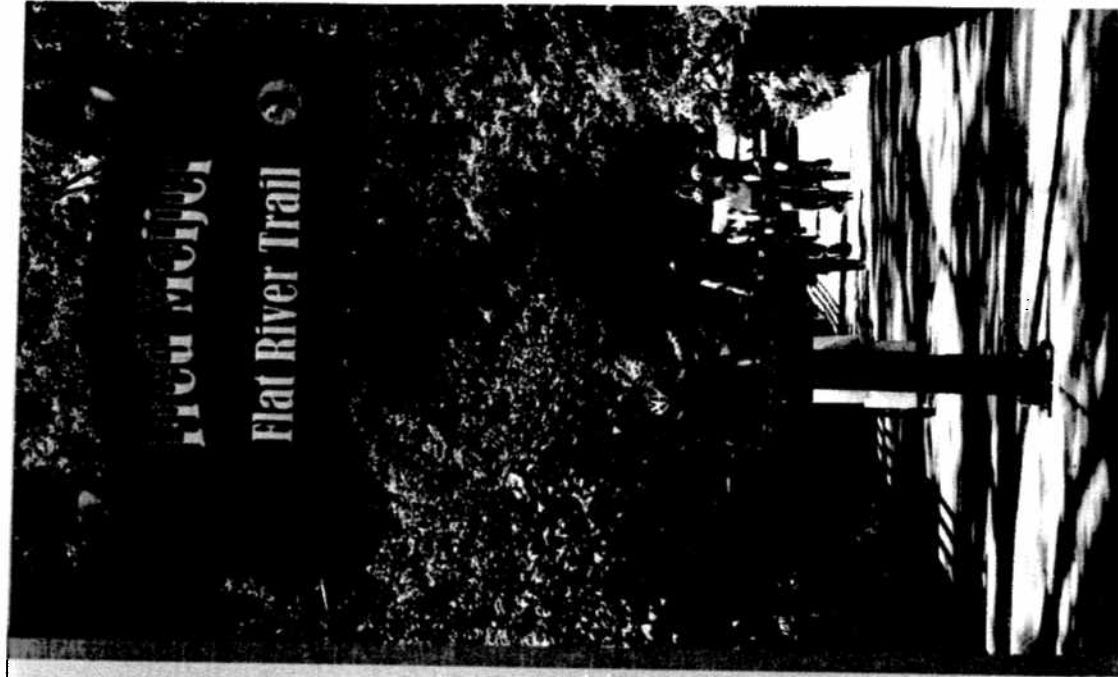
## **FAST FACTS:**

- 1,569 Miles Rail-trail
- 2,100 + Miles with Extensions
- 36 Friends Groups or Coalitions
- 15 Regional Efforts
- We are #2 in the nation, nipping at the heels of Wisconsin!



**JULY 11-17, 2009**

- 2-Day (weekend), 6-Day and 7-Day Tours
  - 35-55 miles per day
  - Breakfast and Dinner Provided
  - Campsites Included
  - Baggage Transport
- A family friendly ride on traffic-free trails in Central Michigan.
- Details and Register at:  
**[www.michigantrails.org](http://www.michigantrails.org)**  
 or call 517.485.6022





# Michigan Bicycle Tour

An adventure on trails and back roads of Michigan

## Three Tour Options: It's a Ride for Everybody

-Day Weekend Tour: July 11 and 12

-Day Tour: July 12-17

-Day Tour: July 11-17

Both experienced and beginner cyclists will enjoy the adventure of a circle tour. Michigander riders have included kids from 8- to 86-years old. It's a family-friendly ride that includes camping each night, two meals provided every day, shuttle service for your baggage, and water stops. All you need to do is ride and enjoy the beautiful scenery of Michigan's trails and back roads.

## Paved Route and Singletrack Options

This is a tour ideal for hybrid, mountain bikes and road bikes. We've included a paved route option for road bikes and a singletrack option for advanced mountain bikers.

## New! Circle Route for 2009

Starting in central Michigan, the tour will circle around the central Michigan area along miles of trails including the Fred Meijer Heartland Trail, Bay City Riverwalk Railtrail System,

Pere Marquette Rail-Trail, Fred Meijer White Pine Trail, and Fred Meijer Flat River Trail. Surfaces range from paved to crushed stone. Sometimes we'll venture out on low-traffic back roads to get from trail to trail. The 35-55-mile days allow for lots of time to stop, take in the sights, and enjoy the countryside.

## Learn More and Sign Up Today

Visit [www.MichiganTrails.org](http://www.MichiganTrails.org) to learn more about the Michigander and register for the 2009 tour. For a hard copy of the registration form call 517-485-6022.

## About the Michigan Trails & Greenways Alliance

The MTGA is dedicated to connecting Michigan with a system of trails and greenways for recreation, health, transportation, economic development, and environmental cultural preservation.

[www.MichiganTrails.org](http://www.MichiganTrails.org)  
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Affiliated with Michigan Fitness Foundation



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